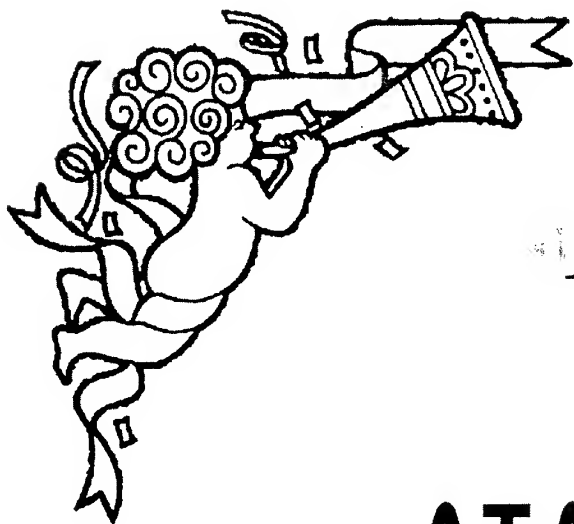


NOAH

Northern Ohio Atari Helpers

NewsNotes



1993
*The
Year
Of*
ATARI (???)

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*Please submit your articles for the
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This publication is created using an Atari Mega STe computer w/4megs, a 535 Meg hard drive, a monochrome monitor and a PCP Laser printer all furnished by A A A Video Repair & Computers. PageStream is used for page layout, WordPerfect ST is used to edit articles and clip art furnished by numerous sources including Electric Beach Computer Products.

N.O.A.H. News

I Can't beleive that it's that time of year already. In just a few days we can watch all the hard work of the past couple of weeks, shopping, wrapping, etc., get undone in a couple of seconds. Then as if that is not enough, seven days after that we once again welcome another year, 1993!

Could this be the year ATARI actually delivers a product when they say they will? Could this be the year that Atari America outsells Atari Europe? could this be the year that Atari discovers what advertising is? Could this be the year that Kevin Steele leaves the MAC for the Atari? Could this be the year that Nomad finds the virus of his dreams? Could this be the year that Paul actually marries Joanna? Could this be the year that Mustang quits writing lists? Could this be the year that Frank tells UPS that ground service is ok? Could this be the year that Doc Terror actually is nice to someone? Could this be the year that Martin Quinones quits experimenting with 8-bit motherboards? Could this be the year that Orion gets somewhere on time? Could this be the year that Nurse Dolly and Dan come into the store without fighting? Could this be the year that Saddam realizes his people think as much of him as the Americans? Could this be the year that the Beatles make a comeback? Could this be the year that kids appreciate parents? Could this be the year that L.S. thinks first!? Could this be the year that Dale stays at one job for at least a year?

If any of the above happens... 1993 will be a good year !!!

*Season's
Greetings*

Doug

GFA NEWS

Well, the group was just formed so not a lot of news yet but judging by the initial response, this could very well become one of the larger mainstays of the Newsletter. I hope all who want to get to know GFA better can make it to the meeting on the 21st of December. In the meantime, here's a little something to try yourself while you wait... Guru Gary

GFA Listing Of The Month

From... Gary Dooms a.k.a. Guru Gary

```
,
' BAPPI Software (c)1992
' ST Nerd BBS (216)582-1904 1200 2400 baud 340+ Megs
(Nomad)
,
' Custom windows...      *** Medium Resolution ***
' Just call procedure with your chosen parameters
,
' twindow(ax%,ay%,aw%,ah%,athk%,atitle$,afill%)
' ax% = x coordinate top left corner of window
' ay% = y coordinate top left corner of window
' aw% = x coordinate bottom right corner of window
' ah% = y coordinate bottom right corner of window
' athk% = thickness of shadow (0 if no shadow)
' atitle$ = text you want in the title bar (" " if none)
' afill% = 1 if window is colored (blue recommended), 0 if white
,
,
' *** EXAMPLE ***
SETCOLOR 2,0,10,13
,
GOSUB twindow(50,10,600,150,10,"BAPPI Software (c)1992",0)
GOSUB twindow(55,22,155,146,4,"Window 2",1)
GOSUB twindow(400,22,550,100,8,"Window 3",0)
```

```

GOSUB twindow(165,107,590,146,0,"Window 4 (No Shadow)",1)
,
GRAPHMODE 2
DEFTEXT 1,0,0,6
TEXT 63,86," GFA Basic "
DEFTEXT 0,0,0,6
TEXT 62,85," GFA Basic "
DEFTEXT 1,0,0,6
TEXT 430,45,"ST Nerd BBS"
TEXT 422,55,"(216)582-1904"
TEXT 440,65,"12oo 24oo"
DEFTEXT 1,1,0,13
TEXT 265,138,"Any Key or Mouse Click to Exit"
DEFTEXT 0,1,0,13
TEXT 262,136,"Any Key or Mouse Click to Exit"
,
REPEAT
UNTIL MOUSEK OR LEN(INKEY$)
EDIT
' *****
,
PROCEDURE twindow(ax&,ay&,aw&,ah&,athk&,atitle$,afill&)
  DEFFILL 1,2,8
  PBOX ax&+athk&,ay&+athk&/2,aw&+athk&,ah&+athk&/2
  DEFFILL 0,2,8
  PBOX ax&+1,ay&+1,aw&-1,ah&-1
  BOX ax&,ay&,aw&,ay&+10
  BOX ax&,ay&+10,aw&,ah&
  IF afill&=1
    DEFFILL 3,2,8
  ELSE
    DEFFILL 0,2,8
  ENDIF
  PBOX ax&+1,ay&+11,aw&-1,ah&-1
  centered&=((aw&-ax&)/2)+ax&-((LEN(atitle$)*8)/2)
  DEFTEXT 1,0,0,6
  TEXT centered&,ay&+8,atitle$
RETURN

```

Type this one in and bring it to the next meeting on December 21, 1992 at A A A Video & Repair. The meeting will start around 7:00 and be hosted by Gary Dooms Master of GFA...

Think Spring



Kids Page

A letter to all SysOps...

(continued from last month) (oh hell, here's the whole thing...)

{ This rather lengthy text file addressed "To the sysop", undated }
{ and unsigned is pertaining to what the author would like to see }
{ in a BBS. The text seems generic and not specifically directed }
{ at BBS Express! ST. In any event, we we received the file and }
{ C&R Systems on 6 November 1992 and have added our }
comments to }

{ it. Our comments are in { } brakets. }

Rich Sanchez

C&R Systems

P.O. Box J

Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214

BBS: 717-765-8623



To the SysOp,

After dealing with dozens of boards, I've noticed that many have great features that are lacking in others, and vice versa. I thought I'd write down the features that it would be nice if every board had. I know that each of you acquires a particular BBS program so you may not have a lot to say about what features exist, but just in case, here they are. Since most of my on-line time involves uploading and downloading files, you'll find that the following suggestions are mostly file transfer oriented. Most of these features already exist on most boards, which is a positive indication that almost everyone is trying hard to provide good service. But, if you notice something in the following list that you don't have, maybe you'll want to consider adding it somehow (maybe by passing on the suggestion to the makers of your BBS software).

Most importantly, all this criticism is intended to be positive. I can see where a sysop, upon reading the following, might say, "Who does this ingrate think he is?". Please resist the temptation. Most sysops request positive feedback. That's what this is intended to be.

LOGIN SUGGESTIONS

(1) Each board should give a very brief description of its orientation BEFORE the user supplies his/her ID. That way a new

user could decide to forget the whole thing, and not tie up your line in those cases where he/she isn't interested in your specialties. For example, I've found it very helpful when a board states from the start "There are no files on this board" or "This is a Mac-oriented board". On the other extreme, I've had cases where I've gone through the whole registration process only to discover that the board is not one that I can use.

{ C&R Systems agrees. This is often over looked by SysOp's.
BBS } { Express! ST does allow this feature in the
NEWUSER.HLP file }

(2) Pretty screens are nice, but provide a way for the user who's seen them repeatedly to bail out and get to business. If I had a board (I don't. I've been too lazy and cheap and I really respect those of you who keep them going.), I'm sure I would want a distinctive opening screen. But when they take forever to appear, it becomes a little bit counterproductive. (Don't get mad. I appreciate the services you all provide so much that I'll gladly keep watching those screen-draws even if you don't change a thing.) I've noticed that the ones that take longest are those that write backwards or write text across the screen in vertical or diagonal swipes.

{ BBS Express! ST does allow this feature. However it is up to }
{ the SysOp to choose to use this ability or not. Some SysOp's }
{ attempt to force users through a maze of menus. }

(3) It would be nice if every board initially required the same exact three items from each user, first name, followed by last name, followed by password. Then we could have a single macro that works with all boards. As it is, some boards ask other things between last name and password, requiring us to remember which type of BBS we're dealing with.

{ That feature is not as nice as the author would like others to }
{ believe. Some BBS's offer this feature. BBS Express! ST }
{ allows the use of Handles or Alias names which is selectable by }
{ the SysOp. A user may log on with their Name/Handle or their }
{ User Number, then they are asked for their Password. The }
{ proposal by the author assumes that people only have a First }
{ and last name. Many BBS's which use his fashion do not allow }
{ middle initials or one word Names/Handles. On C&R BBS, }

there}
 { 322 users. 172 of them have one word handles, 138 with two }
 { word handles, 11 with three word handles and 1 with a four }
 word}
 { handle. The author proposes that if the logon procedures were }
 { standard "Then we could have a single macro that works with all }
 { boards." We feel this use of a single macro for every BBS is }
 { dangerous. The use of the same name and password on every }
 BBS a user calls is highly discouraged, and some BBS software
 issues a password to new users to prevent some of the abuses
 which occur. }

BULLETIN SUGGESTIONS

(1) I know a major gripe is that no one pays any attention to the bulletins, but some users find them pretty helpful. One type of bulletin that I've seen that I enjoy is a 'history of the board'. It may be an indication of sysop vanity that they decide to chronicle their saga, but it can be pretty interesting to see the progression of equipment that they've bought, the software that they've brought online, the catastrophic setbacks they've suffered. I suspect that this type of autobio might show more users how difficult running a board is, and could lead to an additional donation or two.

{ We agree... A note perhaps to other SysOp's reading this, }
 { however, I suggest a short history of one line per item. Some }
 { of those bulletins become TOO lengthy. }

(2) Many sysops give a detailed orientation of the board, describing the reason they decided to get started and what types of services they're trying to provide. This can be pretty helpful, particularly to those who are searching for a particular type of service or for kindred souls.

{ We agree... However, I would suggest a short history of one }
 { perhaps one line per item. Some of those bulletins become TOO }
 { lengthy. }

(3) I know I'm treading on real thin ice here, but it's gotta be said. Some sysops drive off potentially loyal users with diatribes about how they resent leeches. I know it must be annoying to see people show up, lurk, exploit, and give nothing in return (not even files). But few things turn off a user more than lectures and threats when

the user may not have even done anything wrong. Having said that, I have seen some mild rebukes in the form of humor that get the point across without seeming wild-eyed. (For example, the bulletin "Are you a twit?").

```
{ The author is correct for the most part, and our reply is based }
{ based on the authors "If I had a board (I don't. I've been too }
{ lazy and cheap and I really respect those of you who keep them }
{ going.)" At least the author appreciates work and expense that }
{ is required to run a BBS. Our response will not be coming from }
{ us, but a quote from a SysOp who sent us Feedback recently. }
{ The entire message is not included, portions have been removed: }
{ ----- }
{ "Hi Guy. Well terrible news. And possible even worse news to }
{ put out in a couple days if my attitude doesn't change." }
{ "I've lost the drive and most of all that was on it." }
{ "I'm going to have to think about this. In 2 years of }
{ operation, my Users have not (except 10 Folks with $5.00 }
{ contribution for longer time and 1 who sent $10) not 1 user has }
{ ever said 'Thank You for your time and money you spent'." }
{ "So - Depending on the cost - The effort - The Time. This BBS }
{ might cease to exist" "the majority of logons going direct to }
{ GAMES and then LOGOFF and even then without the courtesy }
{ of a }
{ normal logoff, just HANGUP." }
{ So, I'm thinking, it would be nice to have my HD for my use, my }
{ phone for my use and a hell of a lot of less time spent doing }
{ things for the BBS like UpDating, UpGrading, Getting Files and }
{ nothing but abuse from the majority of the Users. }
{ --- END OF MESSAGE ----- }
{ }
{ I would like to add, that the above BBS was in fact primarily a }
{ free BBS. The SysOp did ask for donations to assist in his }
{ expenses. But unfortunately, overall, the message was not an }
{ unusual one... }
```

FILE SECTION SUGGESTIONS

(1) Fundamentals. A user should be easily able to locate files by filename (with wildcards) or with a text search. If a text search looks in both the description and the filename, it should be clearly stated that both are checked.

```
{ We agree. }
```

(2) It should be easy to see the names of all the directories that are provided. This sounds obvious, but boards exist where it's not easy to tell what directories are available, which one you're in, and how to switch.

```
{ We agree. }  
{ We strongly agree and seems to be a major problem with a lot of }  
{ BBS Software. }
```

(3) One of the best features I've seen is "[I]nfo on a file". This feature should let users see ALL the following: filename, size, description, number of downloads, price, date uploaded, who uploaded.

```
{ We agree and BBS Express! ST does exactly that. There is no }  
{ "price" as a default, but the rating could be changed o reflect }  
{ a price if the SysOp wished to do this. }
```

(4) An uploader should be allowed to re-upload using the SAME name. I write and upload shareware, and when I come up with a new version due to enhancements or fixes, I'd like to be able to replace obsolete versions without having to come up with a new name. Here are the problems with requiring a new name:

(a) The author loses the ability to easily see if the latest version is on a particular board. I know we're supposed to use a consistent rational naming scheme and that does help, but it would be best if we could use the same name over and over.

```
{ How is that possible? Just look at the byte size? That can }  
{ change slightly if the SysOp re-archives it with a different }  
{ format, or if it is transmitted for example with Xmodem a few }  
{ bytes will be added. }  
{ Look at the file date? Some BBS software shows the date the }  
{ file was received. } { }  
{ To further complicate the issue, what if one user uploads a }  
{ file and then another one uploads the same file? How is the }  
{ SysOp supposed to know which one was the most current? }  
{ Unarchive the file and hope the author bothered to state what }  
{ version the file was. (A real irritant of mine, authors who }  
{ update their program, but do not update their .DOC file). }
```

(b) The sysop gets bothered by requests from the author to "please eliminate old version such-and-such, and rename the new version".

{ Most BBS Software makes it easy to do this if the names are }
 { not the same. BBS Express! ST allows the SysOp to Delete a }
 { file and its description with two single keystrokes. "(K)ill" }
 { and then "(Y)es" to confirm the deletion. }

(c) File directories get cluttered with obsolete stuff.

{ This is part of the SysOp's job. Plus, I have gotten into the }
 { habit of leaving a few previous versions on the BBS. Too many }
 { times I have received a new version of a program which no }
 { longer works while the previous version does. I have also had }
 { several files that when the fix comes out you need the previous }
 { archive in order to have all the required files. Then there }
 { was the one programmer who updated his software 27 times in }
 { one month! His filename conventions was a maze, and I was }
 { receiving the file updates, not only from the author, but from }
 { users and through a network system. Of course he description }
 { always included the words "The Latest version of ..." }
 { A logical systematic method of filename's seems to be the best }
 { solution in our opinion. }

(5) Let each user select a default protocol.

{ Many software packages allow this. }

(6) Take the description of an upload before you take the actual upload itself. I know that if the upload is aborted, you'll need a way to jettison the description. But the uploader would like to get all the interaction out of the way before watching those packets fly.

{ Disagree... Many users have problems when uploading. }
 { Especially with all the high speed modems which tend to crap }
 { out. Then the user has to re-enter the description on every }
 { attempt for the upload. } { }
 { A possible solution may be to batch upload the files AND the }
 { descriptions all at the same time. I do that on my BBS remote a }
 { lot. The file may be for example TEST.ZIP, and I create an }
 { ASCII text description called TEST.DES. This method does }
 { introduce certain problems and all BBS software may not allow }
 { this system. }

(7) Take the filename first, and check to see if you already have the file before taking any more information. No one wants to type in a detailed description and then be told that the filename is a

duplication.

{ This is done with some BBS software. And on the other hand }
{ makes batch uploading more difficult in some software. But the }
{ basic idea seems good... }

(8) Provide a way to get out of a download or upload gracefully. If something goes wrong, or the user changes his/her mind, they should be able to abort and resume communicating with your board. It's pretty common for a transfer to go bad and then the user can't get back to your menus. What does he do? He has no choice but to hang up, and I've noticed that nobody likes to see that happen. If an upload does abort, make sure the filename that was attempted is cleared from the directory. I've had an upload fail midway, then been unable to later upload the same filename because 'it already exists'.

{ A lot of times this is a problem with the protocol being used }
{ and/or the BBS software, how both modems are set up and }
{ the terminal program being used... }

(9) Clarify what your protocol offerings really are. If it's a variant strain of YMODEM or whatever, let the user know how it's unique.
{ Yes, there is confusion on the Ymodems at times. }

(10) Use ZIP. ARJ, ARC, etc. may be superior in some respects, but so was BETA video.

{ Why doesn't everybody just buy Ford, Whirlpool and Sony? }

(11) The ZIPLAB is one of the slickest innovations I've seen lately. Instead of the user staring at a stationary blinking cursor and wondering what's happening, ZIPLAB explains every step.
{ Never used it... Wonder what it is... }

(12) Provide a file that can be downloaded that contains a listing of all your file offerings. When you do this, you'll occasionally free up your modem, avoiding those situations where a person peruses your offerings one slow page at a time. At the same time, though, continue to allow on-line perusal. Some boards require downloading the file listing to find out what they offer, and I think there may be the occasional user who doesn't think it's worthwhile to do so.

{ Another idea which seems nice, but in reality not used that }
{ much. On some BBS's the files even when archived become }
{ quite large. And then if you have an active BBS, how often to }

you update that file? Once a day? (which is common). It depends a lot on the user. If a user calls frequently, they tend to
 { review New files since their last visit. Then there are }
 { listings which contain so little information that they are }
 { almost useless. The ones with verbose descriptions are better }
 { but then they get quite large. It also seems that local }
 { callers like to browse around... Logging on to a BBS is a }
 { pastime for some users... }

(13) Don't disconnect someone due to time expiration during an upload. They are taking an action that may be beneficial to your board. After the upload finishes, go ahead and drop them in a nice way.

{ We agree. I am not familiar with any BBS software that }
 { disconnects a user during an upload if their time is expired. }
 { I would imagine that the BBS and the software would become }
 { very unpopular. }

(14) Please screen those uploads for viruses with good, effective software. You're the first line of defense. If you find contamination, get back to the uploader and tell them that's one file they should stop using to improve their upload/download ratio.

{ We agree. A recent PC Magazine article/poll showed that BBS's }
 { are not where most people get virus's... }

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

(1) Make sure your menus are easy to use. Maybe you looked through some of the above suggestions and said to yourself, "Yeah, no problem, I already have that capability". But if the user can't figure out how to do it, it might as well not be there. We've all seen cases where our own familiarity with a set of menus prevents us from realizing that they are not all that easy to figure out.

{ We agree, and it is a good point. It is an often overlooked }
 { item. }

(2) Full screen editors are very useful, for file descriptions, for messages, for every other static purpose.

{ Matter of opinion... If you use several computers with }
 { different terminals and monitors, they can be a pain }

(3) Provide an obvious way out of every situation. It can be pretty frustrating to be in some remote corner deep in the bowels of the

BBS and not know how to return to the point from whence one came. An orderly backup through menus is essential, but a way to get back to tmain menu immediately is also nice.

{ Many BBS's offer this...Some with a Control X, some with an X }
{ or a Q. Some are in fact quite difficult to use. }

(4) Treat users with respect. Sure, if they're trying to crash you or circumvent safeguards, nuke 'em. And I've heard that it's annoying to be paged or otherwise queried, when the answer is easy to find in the bulletins. But I've been chewed out on occasion when I tried hard to find the answer first. It leaves a bad taste in the mouth, you know? Don't keep running the timer when a user is reading your bulletins, or at least charge them just half time. They may be trying to find an answer to avoid bothering you, and at the very least they're showing an interest in what you have to say.
{ Well made point... }

(5) Make sure your menus have a novice mode and an expert mode. Novices may need to see the whole pretty menu get painted to fill the screen. 'Experts' already know the key they need to hit; they're just waiting to get a chance to hit it. Along the same lines, it's real nice to run across a board that acts on keystrokes immediately, even if the whole menu is not done being displayed.
{ Another Well made point... }

MESSAGING

(1) I don't have many suggestions (did I hear a sigh of relief?) since I don't take much advantage of the many messaging capabilities. Perhaps some other user who spends a lot of time writing to other people could provide a useful positive list of suggestions. The only failing that I've seen in some boards is that sometimes I can't figure out how to write to the sysop. It's nice when I see a menu entry called "[C]omment to sysop", because then I know exactly what to do. The feature I see a lot where one can comment when logging off is nice but only if the user knows the opportunity will be provided. I had one or two occasions where I didn't see any "Comment to sysop" feature so I reasoned that I'd leave a message when I logged off, only to see "NO CARRIER" next.

{ Yet another well made point... (About the log-off...) }

OK, that's it. Believe me, I mean well. Occasionally I've run

acrosswell-thought-out and respectful "How Users should Act" bulletins that helped me see the types of things sysops like and dislike. This little monologue is intended to return the favor, with mutual cooperation and enjoyment the goal. Thanks for hearing me out.

{ The authors comments seem to be sincere and based on actual }
experience. The choice of a particular BBS Software is a }
of personal preference. The same as Word Processors, Database }
programs and even Programming Languages. }

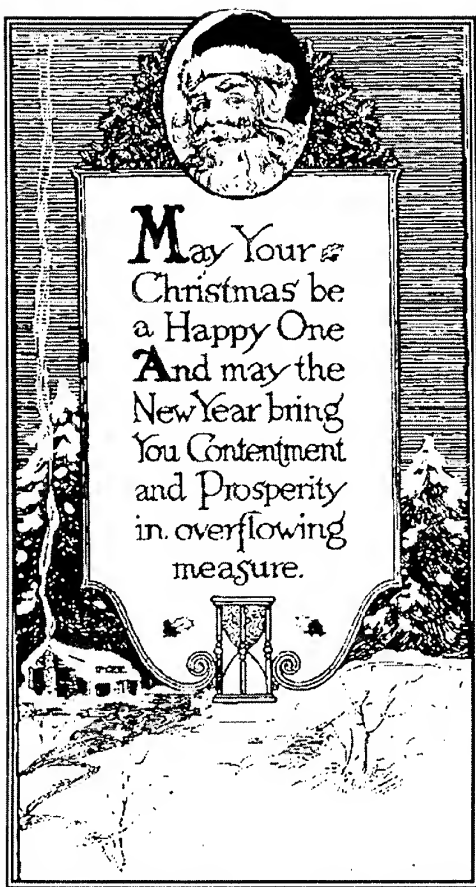
{ Users have different }
desires also. His/Her comments were well thought out and some }
of them are just a matter of personal preference... }

{ Rich Sanchez }

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January 1993



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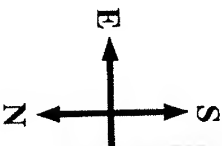
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